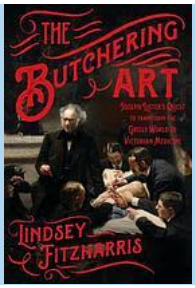
Discussion Guide



The Butchering Art
Lindsey Fitzharris

Scientific American/Farrar, Straus and Giroux
2017
286 pages
ISBN: 978-0374117290

History of Medicine

Summary

A dramatic account of how 19th-century Quaker surgeon Joseph Lister developed an antiseptic method that indelibly changed medicine. The story describes the practices and risks of early operating theaters as well as the belief systems of Lister's contemporaries.

Questions

1. How did Lister's upbringing influence his career?
2. What did you learn about the practice of medicine during this period of history that you did not previously know? What was most surprising or shocking?
3. Antiseptic treatment is common practice today, so why was Lister not immediately praised for his discovery? How did the use of anesthesia have a reverse or incongruent result in the operating room?
4. How did Lister's ad hoc abscess drain invention save Queen Victoria's life?
5. Medicine has been categorized as both an art and a science. Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. What are some of the ethical, moral, or social implications for practicing medicine that are discussed in the story? Did the book change your opinion or view of the practice of medicine? How so?
7. Why do you think the author chose *The Butchering Art* for the book title?
8. Describing medicine in a way that is understandable and enjoyable to read can be challenging. Did the author accomplish this? How so?

This discussion guide was inspired from "The Butchering Art: Joseph Lister's Quest to Transform the Grisly World of Victorian Medicine." Pithy Summary.

This discussion guide has been funded in whole or in part with Federal funds from the National Library of Medicine (NLM), National Institutes of Health (NIH). The content was created by the NNLM Reading Club for educational use and is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). January 2024

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